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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal and merciful God, thank You for both spiritual and temporal blessings, particularly the riches of Your mercies poured down upon us.

Thank You for blessing our lawmakers, for guiding their thoughts and words so that their labors glorify You. Lord, give them the strength and courage to fulfill Your commands, trusting Your wisdom more than their own. Save them from either desiring or seeking the honor that comes only from humanity, but may they desire Your approval more than life itself. Keep them from evil as they find safety in Your love. Lord, give them the humility to know that no one has a corner on Your truth and that we need each other to discover Your guidance together.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 5, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CARDIN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, normally in opening the majority leader goes first, but he and I have never viewed this as a contentious process. So since he is not here, I will go ahead with my statement.

JOBS CREATION AND TRADE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, when it comes to the state of our economy, the American people have seen enough choreographed rallies on factory floors and speeches that sound good but lead to nothing.

After 2 years of chronic joblessness, they want results.

And that is why we have seen a growing consensus in Washington over the past few weeks that something serious must be done about our Nation's debt.

Even Democrats now admit that failing to bring down the debt would be far more damaging to our Nation's economy in the long run than failing to raise the debt ceiling. The situation has been described as the most predictable crisis in American history. People on both sides of the aisle now realize that the warning bells are too loud to ignore. And last month, President Obama himself made a crucial admission.

In a sign that he too is starting to worry about the prospects of inaction, the President said that failing to produce a serious plan for tackling the deficit and the debt could be a bigger drag on the economy than anything else.

So more and more people see the problem. Now the challenge is achieving a result.

And that is why I proposed a few basic principles yesterday that I believe could guide us to success.

This morning, I want to reiterate those principles ahead of the meeting at Blair House.

By setting out clear principles up front, we are far more likely to get somewhere. And to prevent this crisis before it strikes.

First: It is time our friends on the other side stop pitting one group of Americans against another. Solving this crisis will require all of us working together. Let's act like it.

Second: The level of spending that Democrats want to maintain just is not possible without raising taxes on the middle class, which we know is not going to happen. We are only going to solve this crisis by admitting up front that we have a spending problem.

Third: Entitlements need to be a part of this discussion. So let's drop the scare tactics and work together on reform. Nobody is talking about taking anybody's Medicare.

Fourth: Raising taxes is the last thing we should be doing in the middle of a recession. What's more, a bipartisan majority here in the Senate opposes it. So let's set that idea aside and find some common ground instead. If we recognize these things, we can avert this crisis. If we do not, we will not. And I assure you we will all answer for it.

Very few people saw the last crisis coming. This one, on the other hand, is clear as day. Failing to work together in good faith on a solution is completely indefensible. Everybody agrees

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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